

# Christian Community

Volume 9, No. 2

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## Warning All Ministers

The 1954 revision of the social security law gave ministers the opportunity to choose whether or not they would participate in the Old Age and Survivors' Insurance program as "self-employed" persons.

Those who were active ordained clergymen prior to January 1, 1955 must file their waivers, secure their social security cards (if they do not have them), and include payment of their social security tax (3% of 1956 income up to \$4200) before April 15, 1957.

Those entering the ministry after January 1, 1955 have a maximum of two years following their ordination within which to elect coverage or forfeit the privilege.

Waivers and applications for social security cards may be secured from the nearest Social Security Administration office. Income must be reported and tax paid on proper forms at time income tax return is made.

Effective January 1, 1957 the self-employed social security tax is increased to 3⅜%.

## Join In Institute

The social action committees of Southern Synod and the Southern convention will conduct an Institute on Christian Social Action at Franklinton-Bricks, Congregational Christian center near Rocky Mount, North Carolina, March 4 and 5. Information may be secured from the Reverend Banks Shepherd, 701 Fifth St., S.E., Hickory, N. C.

## WE APOLOGIZE

Last month we reprinted in this column a cartoon, giving credit to the *Norfolk Journal and Guide*—as was done by the reputable publication from which we got it. It just happens that our source slipped up, for the work was originally done by "Herblock" in the *Washington Post and Times-Herald*. We especially regret the error since both "Herblock" and his paper have done so much to arouse public concern and understanding on important issues.

## The Moral Aspects of Segregation

By Benjamin E. Mays

Whenever a strong dominant group possesses all the power, political, educational, economic, and wields all the power; makes all the laws, municipal, state and federal, and administers all the laws; writes all constitutions, municipal, state and federal, and interprets these constitutions; collects and holds all the money, municipal, state, and federal and distributes all the money; determines all policies—governmental, business, political and educational; when that group plans and places heavy burdens, grievous to be borne, upon the backs of the weak,

that act is immoral. If the strong group is a Christian group or a follower of Judaism both of which contend that God is creator, judge, impartial, just, universal, love and that man was created in God's image, the act is against God and man—thus immoral. If the strong group is atheistic, the act is against humanity—still immoral.

No group is wise enough, good enough, strong enough, to assume an omnipotent and omniscient role; no group is good enough, wise enough to

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An unusual expression of inter-faith cooperation is the altar in the recently dedicated chapel of the Wooster (Ohio) Community Hospital. Standing beside it are Msgr. B. J. Weigand of St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church, Rabbi Louis Schechter of Knesseth Israel Temple, and the Reverend Leo A. Keil, pastor of Trinity Evangelical and Reformed Church, who cooperated in the project. The altar was designed and built by the Reverend Eugene Buxton of St. James Episcopal Church, and other appointments of the chapel were provided by various church and civic groups.



# The Moral Aspects of Segregation

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restrict the mind, circumscribe the soul, and to limit the physical movements of another group. To do that is blasphemy. It is a usurpation of the role of God.

If the strong handicaps the weak on the grounds of race or color, it is all the more immoral because we penalize the group for conditions over which it has no control, for being what nature or nature's God made it. And that is tantamount to saying to God, "You made a mistake, God, when you didn't make all races white." If there were a law which said that an illiterate group had to be segregated, the segregated group could go to school and become literate. If there were a law which said that all peoples with incomes below \$5,000 a year had to be segregated, the people under \$5,000 a year could strive to rise above the \$5,000 bracket. If there were a law which said that men and women who did not bathe had to be segregated, they could develop the habit of daily baths and remove the stigma. If there were a law which said that all groups had to be Catholics, the Jews and Protestants could do something about it by joining the Catholic Church. But to segregate a man because his skin is brown or black, red or yellow, is to segregate a man for circumstances over which he has no control. And of all immoral acts, this is the most immoral.

So the May 17, 1954 Decision of the Supreme Court and all the decisions against segregation are attempts on the part of the judges involved to abolish a great wrong which the strong has deliberately placed upon the backs of the weak. It is an attempt on the part of federal and state judges to remove this stigma, this wrong through constitutional means, which is the democratic, American way.

I said a moment ago that if the strong deliberately picks out a weak racial group and places upon it heavy burdens that act is immoral. Let me try to analyze this burden, segregation, which has been imposed upon millions of Americans of color. There are at least

three main reasons for legal segregation in the United States.

1. The first objective of segregation is to place a legal badge of inferiority upon the segregated, to brand him as unfit to move freely among other human beings. This badge says the segregated is mentally, morally, and socially unfit to move around as a free man.
2. The second objective of segregation is to set the segregated apart so that he can be treated as an inferior: in the courts, in recreation, in transportation, in politics, in government, in employment, in religion, in education, in hotels, in motels, restaurants and in every other area of American life. And all of this has been done without the consent of the segregated.
3. The third objective of legalized segregation follows from the first two. It is designed to make the segregated believe that he is inferior, that he is nobody and to make him accept willingly his inferior status in society. It is these conditions which the May 17, 1954, Decision of the Supreme Court and other federal decisions against segregation are designed to correct—to remove this immoral stigma that has been placed upon 16 million Negro Americans, and these are the reasons every thinking Negro wants the legal badge of segregation removed so that he might be able to walk the earth with dignity, as a man, and not cringe and kow-tow as a slave. He believes that this is his God-given right on the earth.

Segregation is immoral because it has inflicted a wound upon the soul of the segregated and so restricted his mind that millions of Negroes now alive will never be cured of the disease of inferiority. Many of them have come to feel and believe that they are inferior or that the cards are so stacked against them that it is useless for them to strive for the highest and the best. Segregate a race for ninety years, tell that race in books, in law, in courts, in education, in church and school, in employment, in transportation, in hotels and motels, in the government that it is inferior—it is bound to leave its damaging mark upon the souls and minds of the segregated. It is these conditions that the federal courts seek to change.

Any country that restricts the full

development of any segment of society retards its own growth and development. The segregated produces less, and even the minds of the strong group are circumscribed because they are often afraid to pursue the whole truth and they spend too much time seeking ways and means of how to keep the segregated group in "its place." Segregation is immoral because it leads to injustice, brutality, and lynching on the part of the group that segregates. The segregated is somebody that can be pushed around as desired by the segregator. As a rule equal justice in the courts is almost impossible for a member of the segregated group if it involves a member of the group imposing segregation. The segregated has no rights that the segregator is bound to respect.

The chief sin of segregation is the distortion of human personality. It damages the soul of both the segregator and the segregated. It gives the segregated a feeling of inherent inferiority which is not based on facts, and it gives the segregator a feeling of superiority which is not based on facts. It is difficult to know who is damaged more—the segregated or the segregator.

It is false accusation to say that Negroes hail the May 17, 1954, Decision of the Supreme Court because they want to mingle socially with white people. Negroes want segregation abolished because they want the legal stigma of inferiority removed and because they do not believe that equality of educational opportunities can be completely achieved in a society where the law brands a group inferior. When a Negro rides in a Pullman unsegregated he does it not because he wants to ride with white people. He may or may not engage in conversations with a white person. He wants good accommodations. When he eats in an unsegregated diner on the train, he goes in because he is hungry and not because he wants to eat with white people. He goes to the diner not even to mingle with Negroes but to get something to eat. But as he eats and rides he wants no badge of inferiority pinned on his back. He wants to eat and ride with dignity. No Negro clothed in his right mind believes that his social status will be enhanced just because he associates with white people.

It is also a false accusation to say that Negroes are insisting that segregated schools must be abolished today or tomorrow, simultaneously all over the place. As far as I know, no Negro leader has ever advocated that, and they have not even said when desegregation is to

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be a finished job. They do say that the Supreme Court is the highest law of the land and we should respect that law. Negro leaders do say that each local community should bring together the racial groups in that community, calmly sit down and plan ways and means not how they can circumvent the decision but how they can implement it and plan together when and where they will start. They will be able to start sooner in some places than in others and move faster in some places than in others but begin the process in good faith and with good intent. To deliberately scheme, to deliberately plan through nefarious methods, through violence, boycott and threats to nullify the Decision of the highest law in the land is not only immoral but it encourages a disregard for all laws which we do not like.

We meet the moral issue again. To write into our constitutions things that we do not intend to carry out is an immoral act. I think I am right when I say that most of our states, certainly some of them, say in their constitutions "separate but equal." But you know as well as I do that on the whole the gulf of inequality in education widened with the years. There was no serious attempt nor desire in this country to provide Negroes with educational opportunities equal to those for whites. The great surge to equalize educational opportunities for Negroes did not begin until after 1935 when Murray won his suit to enter the law school of the University of Maryland. It is also clear that the millions poured into Negro education in the last 20 years were appropriated not so much because it was right but in an endeavor to maintain segregation.

We brought this situation upon ourselves. We here in the South have said all along that we believe in segregation but equal segregation. In 1896 in the Louisiana case, Plessy versus Ferguson, the United States Supreme Court confirmed the doctrine "separate but equal." But from 1896 to 1935 there was practically nothing done to make the separate equal. When Murray won his case in 1935, we knew we had to move toward equalization. Since 1935 many suits have been won.

It would have been a mighty fine thing if we had obeyed the Supreme Court in 1896 and equalized educational opportunities for Negroes. If we had done that the problem would have been solved because gradually the separate school system would have been abolished and we would have been saved from the agony and fear of this hour. We didn't obey the Supreme Court in 1896 and

we do not want to obey it now.

Let me say again that the May 17, 1954, Decision of the Supreme Court is an effort to abolish a great evil through orderly processes. And we are morally obligated to implement the Decision or modify the federal constitution and say plainly that this constitution was meant for white people and not for Negroes and that the Declaration of Independence created mostly by the mind of the great southerner, Thomas Jefferson, was meant for white people and not Negroes. Tell the world honestly that we do not believe that part of the Declaration of Independence which says in essence that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

**We are morally obligated to abolish legalized segregation in America or reinterpret the Christian Gospel, the Old and New Testaments, and make the Gospel say that the noble principles of Judaism and Christianity are not applicable to colored peoples and Negroes. Tell the world honestly and plainly that the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man cannot work where the colored races are involved. We are morally obligated to move toward implementing the Decision in the deep south or lose our moral leadership in the world. If we do not do it, we must play the role of hypocrisy, preaching one thing and doing another. This is the dilemma which faces our democracy.**

The eyes of the world are upon us. One billion or more colored people in Asia and Africa are judging our democracy solely on the basis of how we treat Negroes. White Europe is watching us too. I shall never forget the day in Lucknow, India, when nine reporters from all over India questioned me for 90 minutes about how Negroes are treated in the United States. I shall remember to my dying day the event in 1937 when the principal of an untouchable school introduced me to his boys as an untouchable from the United States. At first it angered me. But on second thought I knew that he was right. Though great progress has been made, for which I am grateful, I and my kind are still untouchables in many sections of the country. There are places where wealth, decency, culture, education, religion, and position will do no good if a Negro. None of these things can take away the mark of untouchability. And the world knows this.

Recently a group of colored students from Asia, Africa, the Middle East and South America were visiting an outstanding Southern town. All the colored

people except those from Africa and Haiti could live in the downtown hotels. The Africans and the Haitians had to seek refuge on the campus of a Negro College. That incident was known to all the other colored students and it will be told many times in Europe, Asia, Africa—and it will not help us in our efforts to democratize the world.

Not long ago a Jew from South Africa and a man from India were guests of a Negro professor. He drove them for several days through the urban and rural sections of his state. The Negro, the host, a citizen of the United States, could not get food from the hotels and restaurants. His guests, one a Jew and the other an Indian, had to go in and buy food for him. The man who introduced me in India as an untouchable was right. The Negro is America's untouchable.

Two or three years ago a friend of mine was traveling in Germany. He met a German who had traveled widely in the United States. He told my friend that he hangs his head in shame every time he thinks of what his country did to the Jews—killing six millions of them. But he told my friend that after seeing what segregation has done to the soul of the Negro in the South, he has come to the conclusion that it is worse than what Hitler and his colleagues did to the Jews in Germany. He may be wrong but this is what he is telling the people in Germany.

Make no mistake—as this country could not exist half slave and half free, it cannot exist half segregated and half desegregated. The Supreme Court has given America an opportunity to achieve greatness in the area of moral and spiritual things just as it has already achieved greatness in military and industrial might and in material possessions. It is my belief that the South will accept the challenge of the Supreme Court and thus make America and the South safe for democracy.

If we lose this battle for freedom for 15 million Negroes we will lose it for 145 million whites and eventually we will lose it for the world. This is indeed a time for greatness.

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*Dr. Benjamin E. Mays, president of Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia, since 1940, presented the above paper at a meeting of the Southern Historical Association. It has been published by the Southern Regional Council with related papers by William Faulkner and Cecil Sims, in a booklet entitled, THE SEGREGATION DECISIONS, and is here reprinted by permission.*



## COMMISSION STAFF COVERS WIDE AREA

The outreach of the Commission's influence can be measured to a degree by the extent of the services rendered by members of the staff on field assignments during the calendar year 1956.

The three secretaries of the Commission met with groups in churches, colleges, and other places in twenty-four states and the District of Columbia. The majority of these appointments were within the bounds of the seventeen synods to which the Commission was "zoned" during the year. And nearly all of the "zoned" appointments were scheduled by the chairmen of synodical committees on Christian social action. Where these committees gave help, staff members had the best opportunity to meet with church groups which were ready to think about some of the problems of Christianity in modern society.

These meetings covered a variety of subjects. In Northern Synod, for example, Chairman Leroy Franz and his committee arranged four full day institutes and two single-evening meetings. They were planned on a regional basis, so that representatives of a high percentage of the synod's churches could be reached.

Three discussion topics were suggested by the committee. The church's concern for the American farm problem was given special attention at Hebron, North Dakota, and at Glencoe and Long Prairie in Minnesota, where nearly all of those attending were farmers and their pastors. "Religion and the Public School" was another subject of particular interest in North Dakota, where a state "anti-garb" law is in effect in order to counteract the influence of members of religious orders who teach in the public schools.

A third theme, "Delinquency and Alcoholism," aroused much discussion in a number of places. No American community, it seems, is lacking in family problems resulting from delinquency and

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## COMING OPPORTUNITIES

### FOR FELLOWSHIP • STUDY • ENRICHMENT Leadership Training For Christian Social Action

**February 26 - March 1**

**Interdenominational Churchmen's Washington Seminar, Washington, D. C.**

**May 14 - 16**

**Congregational Christian Washington Seminar, Washington, D. C.**

**June 30 - August 7**

**Council for Social Action European Study Tour and Travel Seminar.**

**July 1 - 12**

**Fisk University Institute on Race Relations, Nashville, Tenn.**

**July 9 - 13**

**West Coast Institute on Christian Social Action, White Memorial Retreat Center, Mill Valley, California.**

**July 15 - 19**

**Midwest Institute on Christian Social Action, Lakeland College, Plymouth, Wisconsin.**

**July 23 - 27**

**Eastern Institute on Christian Social Action, Massachusetts Congregational Christian Conference Grounds, Framingham, Mass.**

**August 5 - 9**

**Interdenominational Institute on Racial and Cultural Relations, McCormick Theological Seminary, Chicago, Illinois.**

**August 12 - 28**

**Mexico Study Tour. Starting from Mexico City.**

**October 14 - 16**

**United Nations—World Order Seminar, New York City.**

For further information write to

### COMMISSION ON CHRISTIAN SOCIAL ACTION

2969 W. 25th Street

CLEVELAND 13, OHIO

alcoholism; and it is important for church groups to recognize their responsibility in establishing constructive controls.

Many members of our churches want to know the answers to such basic questions as, "Just what do you mean by Christian social action?" and "What does a committee on Christian social action do?" But there have also been times when local church groups wanted to talk over statements adopted by the General Synod and to see how they could be implemented by local groups.

General Synod's concern for ever better race relations, for example, has had much attention. Doubtless the interest in this subject has been stimulated by Supreme Court decisions and by discussion of bus boycotts, NAACP activities, and other events which make the headlines. The race relations secretary has been extremely busy, and has had to decline a number of invitations to meet

with church groups interested in discussing subjects in this field. Wherever possible, however, alternative dates are given consideration.

Another subject which drew much attention at General Synod had to do with the part our nation must play in international affairs. Interest in this subject was reflected in the frequent discussions in our churches about the work of the United Nations, particularly the opportunity this organization offers for the expression of humanitarian concern.

The Commission's field secretaries do not pretend to be experts in every area which concerns the churches. It is our belief, however, that they have acquired considerable skill in helping groups locate their problems and the resources for meeting them and that their leadership has meant a good deal in helping interpret the part twentieth century Christians can play in carrying on the ministry of reconciliation in today's world.